New York
Theatre Critics' Reviews
1951

Volume XII, Number 6 • Rachel W. Coffin, *Editor* • Week of February 26, 1951

1951 PRODUCTIONS
Premieres in Other Years

Original Reviews Appeared In These Volumes

1950 Vol.

Stage Play	*Page*
*Affairs of State	267
Arms and the Man	235
*Bell, Book and Candle	206
Black Chiffon	261
Bless You All	170
*Call Me Madam	243
Captain Brassbound's Conversion	157
Cocktail Party (The)	376
*Country Girl (The)	210
Enemy of the People (An)	154
*Guys and Dolls	185
*Happy Time (The)	370
King Lear	160
*Lady's Not for Burning (The)	213
*Member of the Wedding (The)	397
*Out of This World	166
Pardon Our French	254
Peep Show	285
Peter Pan	306
Ring Round the Moon	189
*Season in the Sun	258
*Twentieth Century	163

•

1949 Vol.

*Gentlemen Prefer Blondes	198
*South Pacific	312

•

1948 Vol.

*Kiss Me, Kate	91
Mister Roberts	338
*Where's Charley?	197

**Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of February 26, 1951*

1951 PRODUCTIONS
Premieres During 1951

Reviews Appear in This Volume

Stage Play	*Page*
*Angel in the Pawnshop	380
*Billy Budd	353
Cox and Box	341
*Darkness at Noon	388
Four Twelves Are 48	384
Gondoliers (The)	351
Green Bay Tree (The)	368
H.M.S. Pinafore	361
*High Ground (The)	336
House of Bernarda Alba (The)	395
Iolanthe	347
King of Friday's Men (The)	334
King Richard II	376
Mikado (The)	370
Not for Children	348
Peer Gynt	373
Pirates of Penzance (The)	341
Razzle Dazzle	339
*Rose Tattoo (The)	363
Royal Family (The)	392
*Second Threshold	398
*Small Hours (The)	344
Ti-Coq	358
Trial by Jury	361

Theatre Openings

"Cox and Box" "Razzle Dazzle"
"The Pirates of Penzance" "The High Ground"
"The King of Friday's Men"

**Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of February 26, 1951*

Theatre Critics' Reviews brings you each week the complete reviews as they originally appeared in these New York newspapers.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
NEW YORK POST HOME NEWS
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK MIRROR
NEW YORK WORLD TELEGRAM & THE SUN
NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK TIMES

All Reviews copyrighted by the newspapers and reproduced by permission.

Yearly Subscription $25.00

Published by CRITICS' THEATRE REVIEWS, Inc., 235 East 22nd Street, New York 10, N. Y.

"The King of Friday's Men"

New York World-Telegram
and
The [illegible] Sun

February 22, 1951

'Friday's Men' Spins Drama of Shillelaghs

By WILLIAM HAWKINS,

Type—Historical romance.
Mood—High adventure.
I find it—Great fun.

It seems a great many years since our theater has offered such unabashed swashbuckling adventurousness as fills "The King of Friday's Men."

That is the reason it seems a little old-fashioned, but it is also timeless. Not in the greatest tradition of costume melodrama, it has excitement, and its own poetic gentleness.

Above all it is a novel subject.

A Tale of Shillelaghs.

This tale of battling and love revolves around a great shillelagh fighter of 18th century Ireland. Not only is this fresh material, but these days it is news when any straight play turns up with three sets.

The plot here is based on the traditional right of an aristocratic landlord to take as mistresses the daughters of his tenants. Whenever he tires of one, he pays her enough so she can bargain for a husband, and sends his press gang after a new girl.

The heroine is by beauty an obvious choice of the gang, though she is on the eve of her marriage to a youngster too slight to battle the landlord's men. Her uncle advises her to make up to the visiting shillelagh champion, who may then defend her honor.

An Irish 'Zenda.'

It is not hard to guess that, as plays like this go, the girl falls really in love with the strapping visitor, but must deny it to save his life. In the end there is promise of a reunion, though the hero is a fugitive of the law.

This is a kind of earthy Irish "Prisoner of Zenda." All it lacks to compete with the best of its school, is a villainous cardinal and some secret sealed papers.

Most of the action bounces off the shillelagh fighter, who is played with great understanding by Walter Macken. Macken played the role in the play's original presentation by Dublin's Abbey Theater. He is a playwright, novelist, designer and producer, as well as being an actor.

A Rich, Lovable Character.

In this role he captures all the wild grace and rambunctious power of a great natural athlete. He has the modesty and the poetic tender turn of a shy lover, which makes the man come believably to life.

This is a portrayal of many facets and colors, adding up to a rich and lovable character.

Ian Martin is the scheming uncle, and plays with a warm comic touch that keeps the play bubbling. Frederic Tozere is the villainous landlord, and fresh young Maggie McNamara makes a pretty debut as the heroine.

A Delayed Opening.

Janet Ward does a sound and important job as the dismissed mistress who yearns for the visiting fighter.

Aside from Mr. Macken and Mr. Martin, no one in the company seemed entirely at home in the play last night. Recent changes in script and director had delayed the opening, and resulted in some vagrant lines at the premiere.

The performance should be relaxed by tonight, and offers the most enjoyable escapist evening to romantic-minded theater goers, as well as introducing a striking new talent in the person of Mr. Macken.

"THE KING OF FRIDAY'S MEN"

Play by Michael J. Molloy, settings and costumes by Stewart Chaney; presented by Michael Grace at the Playhouse Theatre, February 21, 1951. The cast:

Gaisceen.....Ian Martin
Una Brehony..Maggie McNamara
Owen Fennigan....Mac McLeod
Maura Pender.....Janet Ward
Boorla.....Tudor Owen
Bartley Dowd...Walter Macken
Kitty.....Peggy McCay
Rory Commons...Sean McClory
Biddy.....Grania O'Malley
Murty....John Drew Devereaux
Caesar French..Frederic Tozere
Singers..Mary O'Fallon, Hannah O'Leary, Norman Barrs

Synopsis: The action takes place in the west of Ireland, in the year 1787. Act I. The bedroom of Gaisceen's cottage, evening. Act II. Scene 1. Outside an abandoned hut across the river twenty-four hours later. Scene 2. Two days later around noon. Act III. Caesar French's house, evening of the same day.

New York Post
HOME NEWS

February 22, 1951

By Richard Watts Jr.

Mishap of a Romantic Irish Play

There is so much that is engaging about "The King of Friday's Men," which opened at the Playhouse last night, that its final unsatisfactoriness comes as a particular disappointment. This is the Irish play by Michael J. Molloy, one of the newer Abbey dramatists, which had considerable recent success in Dublin and has reportedly faced only troubles of one kind or another since preparations for its New York appearance got under way. These troubles, I am sorry to say, are still very much in evidence, and they sadly prove too much for it.

Although Mr. Molloy's romantic drama about Eighteenth Century Galway is not sturdy enough to overcome its production difficulties, there is a lot in it that deserves commendation. There is a certain emotional freshness about it that is quite winning, and a great deal of the writing has charm, humor and imagination. I think there is no doubt that Mr. Molloy gives evidence of being one of the coming men among contemporary Irish playwrights. I don't want to sound patronizing when I say that he is a "promising" writer.

Frailties

But, even granting the fact that the current production does not do his play justice, "The King of Friday's Men" has its share of weaknesses. After a lively and entertaining first act, it loses ground steadily, and there are long stretches that let things down perilously. The imagination is by no means always forthcoming, and, when it is absent, the drama seems a bit flat and unprofitable. I suspect, however, that, despite its frailties, a good last act might have saved it, but the climax struck me as one of its handicaps.

The story, which has an agreeably romantic atmosphere, is about a wicked West-of-Ireland landlord, who brutally exercises his lordly right of stealing the pretty daughters of his tenantry, and an honest, sturdy shillelah-fighter, who sets out to save a lovely and innocent young girl from becoming the scoundrel's latest mistress. I can't say that I ever felt the child was really in danger, but, anyway, the valiant athlete vanquishes the seducer, only to lose the girl to a younger man. It makes for a pleasantly sad ending.

The Poet's Son

Yet somehow it isn't a completely satisfactory one. It seems a little weak and incomplete. I suppose this is in great part due to the fact that an important subsidiary character, the mad son of a famous poet who hopes that his dying father will leave him his talent, never comes to life in the acting and merely gets in the way of the ending. Anyway, for all its frequent grace, charm and lyric freshness, Mr. Molloy's play stumbles uncertainly, and what might have been a welcome romantic evening, never quite comes off.

While a number of the people concerned with the work are at fault, there can be only enthusiasm for two of the members of the cast. Walter Macken, who played the leading role in the Dublin production, repeats his performance, and he proves himself a first-rate actor, vigorous, powerful, real and enormously engaging. And a fresh and lovely newcomer named Maggie McNamara is lyrically enchanting as the heroine, in addition to being the prettiest young Irish-American actress seen hereabouts since Gene Tierney emerged in something called "Mrs. O'Brien Entertains." Stewart Chaney's sets are excellent. It is too bad about "The King of Friday's Men."

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

February 22, 1951

By OTIS L. GUERNSEY JR.

Saved by the Abbey

A THIN but amiable tale of old Ireland features a stalwart performance by Walter Macken of the Abbey Players at the Playhouse. "The King of Friday's Men" concerns itself with the tribulations of the lowly in 1787, a year in which the lord of the manor could summon a buxom peasant wench to his bedchamber. Written by Michael J. Malloy, also of the Abbey, this script has been imported for a mediocre enactment by a cast that was mostly recruited here. There are flashes of Irish humor in the Irish idiom, but the show's chief asset is Macken's playing of a humble, rugged fighting man.

• • •

The situation presented by the author is a crude forerunner of the modern romantic drama. The gentleman of the district, who does his wooing with armed bailiffs, desires a village lass to be his "tallywoman," and an honest stranger, defending her by cracking skulls with his shillelagh, wins her trust and affection despite his ugly features and simple ways. It is all very neat—too neat, in fact, to be of much use as a play. The paradox of the villagers' love of a good fight and submissiveness to social custom adds humor to the mixture, as do the blarney images delivered in a variety of brogues. But this padding is very thin in many passages of a script that often seems no more than a greentinted trifle.

• • •

There is nothing half-hearted about Macken's performance in a role he created at the Abbey Theater. As the visitor who drops in to help the locals in a scheduled pitched battle against the men of a rival district, he makes a perfect illusion of the humble spirit and the stout fist. He achieves great pathos with his faith in the girl who likes him, at first, only for protection, and his faith that misfortune represents a single honor conferred from above making him one of "Friday's men." Looking as craggy as the principals in an old boxing print, he also manages to appear terrible in anger, particularly in a first act brawl taking place offstage with a few visible fringes. The mannerisms and attitudes of those around him seem assumed and artificial in comparison.

• • •

The play has been staged with much business and little imagination. The third act, especially, is scattered where it should be strongly resolved. Many of the supporting actors rely more on eccentric behavior than upon true expressions of character to round out their parts. Among the most prominent members of the cast are Maggie McNamara as the innocent lass who causes all the trouble, Ian Martin as her uncle conniving to insure her safety without offending his master, Frederic Tozere as the indignant lord and Sean McClory as a half-mad son of a minstrel. Neither the play nor its production are the thing in "The King of Friday's Men," but Walter Macken is indeed an accomplished and welcome visitor to Broadway.

Daily Mirror

February 22, 1951

'King of Friday's Men' A Tale of Old Ireland

By ROBERT COLEMAN

"The King of Friday's Men" set a new long-run record at Dublin's Abbey Theatre with an engagement of six months. The Abbey is a famous art playhouse, and Michael J. Molloy's folk drama is just the kind of play to be at home there. But it seems a little out of place in New York's Playhouse.

"The King of Friday's Men" is a swashbuckling period piece about the Ireland of 1787, with its great minstrels and shillelagh fighters. The latter were the Gaelic equivalents of today's Madison Square Garden fisticuffers. Only instead of using padded gloves, they swung bone-breaking cudgels.

It seems there was a lecherous landowner named Caesar French, who sent out tough gangs to bring pretty peasant girls to his manor house. As soon as he tired of them, they were cast off with tarnished reputations and a few guineas. When the rowdies attempted to seize Una Brehony, shortly before her wedding to Owen Fernigan, Una pretended affection for Bartley Dowd, the shillelagh champ from Tyrawly.

So the susceptible Dowd knocked out more than a half dozen of Caesar's bullies, and carried Una off to a mountain hut for protection. There, she really fell in love with him, but the villainous Caesar revengefully broke up the match. In a rage, Dowd killed him and fled to safety, hoping that some day Una might join him.

There is a sub-plot about Rory Commons, a frustrated minstrel, who failed to inherit his father's gift for poetry and song. At the play's end, Rory ran away with Dowd. Both turned to religion for solace.

"The King of Friday's Men" is a picturesque, colorful, rousing drama of derring-do, which we doubt will prove competition for Broadway's more conventional and commercial attractions.

Michael Grace has given the new arrival an excellent production. The sets and costumes by Stewart Chaney are stunning. The cast is first-rate.

Walter Macken, a towering actor with bulging muscles and booming voice, is perfect as Bartley Dowd. Maggie McNamara, making her debut, is an attractive Una. Ian Martin, Janet Ward, Sean McClory, Tudor Owen and Frederic Tozere are good in other roles. Mac McLeod, Peggy McCay, Grania O'Malley and John Drew Devereaux do well by lesser assignments.

DAILY NEWS

February 22, 1951

'King of Friday's Men' a Brave Tale Of Loves and Fights in Old Ireland

By JOHN CHAPMAN

The trouble between me and the Irish dialect is that it is at once so brave and so beautiful that I just listen to it without ever wondering whether there is any sense to it or not.

This is what happened to me last evening at the Playhouse, where Michael Grace presented Michael J. Molloy's "The King of Friday's Men." Betwixt the poteen, the colleens and the shillelaghs I had a comfortable and pleasant time without bothering too much about the plot.

This play, first produced in 1948 at Dublin's Abbey Theatre, seems to relate how the Irish comported themselves in 1787. Life was largely drinking, fighting and boasting. No man so poor as didn't have a couple of jugs on his person and none so weak that he couldn't crack a dozen heads with his trusty shillelagh. And for boasting there always was a professional story-teller, or composer. It must have been an idyllic time, except when one was recovering from a fractured skull.

Fine Figure of a Man.

The principal actor of "The King of Friday's Men," Walter Macken, is an engaging giant of a man with a mellifluous tongue who portrays the champion fighter of his part of Ireland. He invades new territory and here falls in love with a beautiful girl. But the lass, alas, is betrothed to another—and besides, the landlord of the domain has sent his press gang to capture the wench so that he may have some pleasure with her.

This sounds like a comic opera plot and I think it is. "The King of Friday's Men" would make a grand book for a musical—and I suspect that its basis is, indeed, the Beaumarchais play from which Mozart got "The Marriage of Figaro." As a Broadway play it is negligible, but it is charmingly presented.

A Lovely Colleen.

The colleen heroine, a New Yorker named Maggie McNamara, is the prettiest girl I've seen on the stage all season, and she acts quite nicely, too. Mr. Macken's performance is a broad and lusty one, and there are amusing Irish characterizations by Ian Martin and Sean McClory. Frederic Tozere is okay as the lecherous landlord, and Janet Ward is attractive as his tallywoman — whatever a tallywoman is.

Oh-oh! I just looked it up. The dictionary says that to tally is to live in cohabitation without marriage. Well, 'twas ever thus with landlords.

Stewart Chaney has done some very fine settings for "The King of Friday's Men." I left the play feeling mildly good-natured and would not mind going out now for some poteen. It's pronounced potcheen, and Leo G. Carroll tells me it is Irish moonshine. A kind of bourbon, I hope.

The New York Times

February 22, 1951

Walter Macken in 'The King of Friday's Men,' Written by a Dublin Author

By BROOKS ATKINSON

It is a long time since we have heard the melody of Irish speech in New York, and it would be a pleasure to salute "The King of Friday's Men," which opened at The Playhouse last evening. But Michael J. Molloy's play does not quite sing, and the performance does not quite get to the point of dancing and jigging. Without previous acquaintance with the script in performance, one cannot say exactly why it does not take its place beside some of the older Abbey Theatre bits of folk literature.

But the play and the acting are sufficiently lyrical every now and then to arouse an old love for these Irish incantations that make Anglo-Saxon English seem tongue-tied. Set in the west of Ireland in 1787, "The King of Friday's Men" is the legend of a great fighter who saves a pretty maiden from a lecherous landlord, but has to flee for his life in the end.

* * *

Walter Macken has come here from Ireland to play the part of the superhuman fighter. When he is on the stage "The King of Friday's Men" has strength, excitement and sincerity. It also has moments of tenderness. For Mr. Macken is a fine figure of a man with girth and muscle, humor and humility; and he can make Mr. Molloy's wildest fancies seem wholly true.

The story of the play does not run smoothly. It seems to be put together with some anxiety. But it includes occasional stirring scenes —an epochal brawl just off-stage with the fighters popping in and out frantically, and a scene of forbearing love-making between the maiden and the giant of the shillalah. It also includes a number of original characters, like the frustrated son of a native composer. And much of the dialogue has the rich savor of common speech and the aroma of the open countryside.

Apart from Mr. Macken, who is one of the most interesting actors who have turned up here recently, the cast includes some others worth more helpful direction—Maggie McNamara, who is remarkably pretty and has a gift for acting; Janet Ward, who plays a somber part with a kind of subdued but vital passion; Ian Martin as an excitable gamekeeper; Sean McClory as the composer's bullying son; Tudor Owen as a callous, scheming bailiff, and Frederic Tozere as the contemptuous landlord.

In designing the scenery, Stewart Chaney has done himself proud, especially with his view of an abandoned hut huddled against a brave hill. With so much that is imaginative and vital to work with, you would think that somehow a director could evoke a beautiful performance and make "The King of Friday's Men" into a piece of dramatic poetry. There is a lot of poetry in it somewhere.

Journal-American

February 22, 1951

It Has Been Told Before... And Better

By JOHN McCLAIN

Faith and bejabbers, begorrah if they didn't open a broth of a play last night at the Playhouse Theatre, all about the Irish and shillelaghs and the complications they created for each other in the year 1787. The whole thing presents a strange insight into the social structure of the times.

The niece of the gamekeeper of a large estate is betrothed to an honest lad of her own class, but on the eve of her marriage she is chosen by the lord of the manor to become his "tally-woman" which, I gather, is 18th Century Irish for mistress.

This pleases neither the young woman nor her groom-to-be. But the only apparent way to halt the proceedings is for the young man to beat off the minions who are coming to d e l i v e r her to the Squire.

⊙ ⊙ ⊙

Enlists Bruiser

You only have to take one look at the affianced to realize that he is structurally unequipped for the struggle. So the bride's uncle enlists the services of a professional bruiser from a neighboring county who happens to be on hand, shillelagh and all.

The girl makes a play for the strong-arm guy in the hope that he will protect her from the rich meanie, and when he does so, successfully, of course she falls in love with him.

In the last act the proceedings reach a crisis when the man with the shillelagh comes into the Squire's house and kills him, delivering the doll from a fate worse than death.

She goes off with her original lover, the poor but honest local lad, and the unfortunate muscleman leaves the stage with a rather inadequate comment to the effect that it was wonderful to have known that somebody could have loved him, even temporarily.

Fine Acting

There are two fine performances here — Walter Macken, who is superlative in the part of the bruiser — and Maggie McNamara, as the girl who causes all the ruction.

Irish dramas are always beguiling; it is easy to be lulled into a false sense of delight with the ilt of the language, and this is no exception. I thought everything started out with great promise but I thought it bogged (if you'll pardon the expression) down.

After all it is not an entirely ingenious plot, once you forget the year and the dialect. Large muscular men have many times before put their bodies between frail women and the forces of evil only to lose the frail women to frail men.

I believe this story has been told on the stage before — and better.

"The High Ground"

New York Post
HOME NEWS

February 21, 1951

By Richard Watts Jr.

The Nun Who Solved a Murder Case

Being something of a mystery-story addict, I found myself interested at the 48th Street Theater last night in finding out who had poisoned Leueen MacGrath's rascally brother and tried to frame Miss MacGrath for the crime. Since "The High Ground," which supplies the answers to these queries, is an English melodrama, it suffers from a few f a u l t s characteristic of its school, but it also has a number of pleasant and rather novel virtues, in addition to several excellent performances, and, if you share my delight in fictional murder and its solution, I think you might look in on the new play by Charlotte Hastings.

"THE HIGH GROUND"

Play by Charlotte Hastings; staged by Herman Shumlin; settings and costumes by Peggy Clark; presented by Albert H. Rosen at the Forty-Eighth Street Theatre, February 20, 1951. The cast:

Nurse Phillips...Marian Seldes
Nurse Brent..Patricia Hitchcock
Sister Josephine..Ruth McDevitt
Willy Pentridge..Logan Ramsey
Sister Mary Bonaventure....
Margaret Webster
Dr. Jeffreys.....Tom Helmore
The Mother Superior.....
Margery Maude
Melling.....Neil Fitzgerald
Sarat Cairn..Leueen MacGrath
Miss Pierce.....Mary Bell
Martha Pentridge..Jean Cameron

Synopsis: The action of the play takes place in the hall of the Convent of Our Lady of Rheims in Denzil St. David, a village some miles from Norwich, England. The time is the present. Act I. About 6 p. m. Act II. Scene 1. Shortly after. Scene 2. The next evening. Act III. Scene 1. Next afternoon. Scene 2. Three hours later.

The two chief virtues of "The High Ground" are, I must admit, not the result of exciting writing but of Miss Hastings' selection of the location for her story and her choice of a detective. The setting, not of the murder—which, unfortunately, takes place offstage—but of the solution is a convent of nursing sisters, and,

incidentally, one of the unsolved mysteries of the evening to me is whether the nuns belong to a Catholic or an Anglican order. As for the detective, who solves the case just at curtain time, she is one of the nuns, an understanding soul who cannot believe that the young artist played by Miss MacGrath is the culprit.

The Convent

Anyway, when the play opens, the Convent of Our Lady in Denzil St. David is cut off from the outside world by the rains, and a party of three comes to it for shelter. The visitors turn out to be Miss MacGrath, who is being taken back to prison, after losing her last appeal, to be hanged for giving an overdose of drugs to her brother, and her two guards. Things look pretty black for her, but Sister Bonaventure is as skeptical of her guilt as you and I are and sets out to prove her innocence. I would like to add, as cryptically as possible, that I was able to find the real killer before the nun did through a certain matter of casting.

The setting, the detective, and a genuinely moving performance by Miss MacGrath make an entertaining murder play out of "The High Ground," but I should warn you that there are some handicaps. For one thing, the author has not been satisfied to write merely a detective story. She is also concerned with the spiritual problems of Sister Bonaventure, who seems to be having some mild doubts about her faith, and quite a bit of time that might have been spent on the matter of suspense is devoted to considering them. These scenes struck me as the least satisfying part of the play.

The Wild Boy

Then there is a character who is a staple product of British mystery melodramas and who always worries me. He is the wild, unkempt, half-mad young countryman, slow and uncertain of speech but rather addicted to it, who is sometimes gentle and at other times violent in his conduct, and who always behaves as if he might possibly be guilty. You can be sure of two things concerning him. He is going to have several scenes of fairly hysterical outburst and the audience is going to applaud him loudly at his every exit. Here he is quite well played by Logan Ramsey, but I am a little tired of the role.

As I have said, Miss MacGrath is splendid as the innocent girl, making a most effectively pictorial entrance and playing throughout with honestly moving emotion. Margaret Webster portrays the nun-detective skillfully, and I liked in particular the performances of Tom Helmore as a doctor, Margery Maude as the Mother Superior, and Marian Seldes as a disagreeable and trouble-making nurse. Herman Shumlin's direction is expert. "The High Ground" has its faults, including a propensity for taking a long time to pass a given point, but its virtues are pleasant ones.

Daily Mirror

February 21, 1951

'High Ground' a Whodunit With Good Future

By ROBERT COLEMAN

"The High Ground," a Charlotte Hastings whodunit, looms as the best of the season's new English imports. It kept the customers busy last evening at the 48th St. Theatre trying to uncover the villain in the case. It held their interest constantly, which seemed to indicate that the visitor will be with us for quite a spell.

"The High Ground" has to do with a gifted painter convicted of murdering a worthless brother. While on the way to her execution she is stranded by a flood in a convent hospital. There, a sensitive and intelligent nun becomes convinced of her innocence, and sets about to prove it.

But if you want to discover the identity of the guilty party, you're going to have to drop by the 48th St. We shall not violate the rules of mystery-play reviewing by revealing the culprit in advance. Unless you are a veritable Sherlock Holmes, it's going to take you the good part of a night to arrive at the right conclusion.

Miss Hastings has penned what might be called a psychological thriller, one that depends more on characterization and logic than on obvious tub-thumping trickery for its effect. Albert H. Rosen has given it a first-rate production. Herman Shumlin has directed skillfully, and Peggy Clark has designed helpful settings and costumes.

Co-starred are Margaret Webster, Tom Helmore and Leueen MacGrath. All are excellent. They receive fine support from Ruth McDevitt, Margery Maude, Logan Ramsey, Marian Seldes, Patricia Hitchcock, Neil Fitzgerald, Mary Bell and Jean Cameron.

We think you will find "The High Ground" absorbing theatre. It is far superior to the average melodrama you are likely to encounter these days in the show shops. Literate and suspenseful, it's just what we've been waiting for all season: a top-flight chiller.

New York World-Telegram and The Sun

February 21, 1951

Nun Solves Murder In 'The High Ground'

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

Type—Melodrama.
Strictly for—Mystery fans.

"The High Ground" is a play about a murder and the circumstances which permit a nun to save an innocent girl convicted of it.

The victim is on the way back from a useless appeal in London, to the prison where she will be executed. A storm maroons her with her guards in a convent. The truth of the crime is resolved during their delay.

The girl is circumstantially condemned for having fatally doped her brother, whose incurable paralysis was preventing her marriage. A stroke only recently incapacitated the dead man. Before this attack, he was what is commonly called an unmitigated cad. Innumerable people would have relished polishing him off. But his sister was alone with him when the overdose of sedative was administered.

Not a Thriller.

The play has certain basic faults for its classification. It never aims to be a thriller. Instead it moves along on a dignified plane that is pretty literary.

Most of its progress springs from the Sister who is vaguely discontented with her lot. She finds the championing of this unfortunate girl an outlet for her feeling of uselessness.

The play finds periodical excitement from contrived and external elements. There is a young nurse in the nun's hospital, who is just plain ornery, and precipitates a crisis with a feeble-minded boy.

The daft lad has a couple of promising moments on his own, too, but neither of these characters really contributes anything but red herrings to the main story line.

Fireworks at Last.

Most of the emotional fireworks are saved up for the last scene. Then, in the tradition of mystery plays, the works are shot. The chief trouble with the solution is that there is no plausible reason why a nun should figure it out, when hundreds of people closer to the case failed to see it. Nor is her forcing of a confession very convincing.

Some of the North of England accents veiled explanations for me. For instance, I never understood why so many of the people in the convent had known each other before. But this is the sort of license one should not quarrel with in mysteries.

Margaret Webster plays the detecting Nun, and a thankless role it is. Thinly written, the character remains distant because her only motives are mystic and inexplicable. Miss Webster gives her what stature she can, which is quite a lot considering her material.

Moodily Distraught.

Leueen MacGrath, having made her bow as a playwright with "The Small Hours" on Thursday, returns to her original calling as an actress here, to play the victim. Since she is one of the most attractive women in the theater, and the role calls for her to be moodily distraught most of the time, she is most successful.

Tom Helmore is also co-starred as a doctor. The play is treated with utmost seriousness, in writing and direction, and Mr. Helmore plays his role as straight as a ruler.

Ruth McDevitt is highly agreeable as a sister who cooks, and along with Patricia Hitchcock as a nurse, provides the evening's only light moments. Margery Maude is effective in a most illogically written role, and Logan Ramsey sustains the glowering half-wit with great balance.

Since the play inclines to disdain blood and thunder for character and argument, it is a pity that it is not more thoughtfully executed. As it stands, it is thin and talky.

The New York Times

February 21, 1951

Many Able Actors Unmask the Murderer in English Mystery Drama

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Wait patiently until well into the third act, and "The High Ground" put on at the Forty-eighth Street last evening, will tie up the loose ends and unmask the real murderer. Sister Mary Bonaventure, the best mind in the Convent of Our Lady of Rheims, has been pondering the problem during the preliminary two-thirds of the play. Where the bigwigs of the British law have failed Sister Mary succeeds, and the murderer is well on his way to the death house.

Since Margaret Webster plays the part, this feat of instinctive jurisprudence is not astonishing. For Miss Webster, in or out of a sister's robes, is about the ablest woman in our theatre. But even a theatregoer who is properly grateful for the just solution to a nasty mess cannot help wishing that Miss Webster had also taken a few moments out of her busy schedule to write the drama. Her style is brisker and blunter than the style of the author.

* * *

The author is Charlotte Hastings. "The High Ground" comes to us with the cachet of London affixed in the proper place. This is the ominous story of a brilliant artist of gentle birth who is about to be executed for doing in her horrible brother. On her way to the death-house she and her guards are marooned in the convent during one of those epochal rainstorms that often blow up in the theatre.

Everyone is satisfied that she is guilty and is politely sorry. But Sister Mary, as if, good woman, she did not have enough other things on her mind, suspects that she is innocent. Out of regard for public safety this column is enjoined from revealing the identity of the real criminal. He is not, however, the person you will innocently suspect.

* * *

Under Herman Shumlin's meticulous and expert direction the parts are well cast and the performance is professional and enjoyable. Miss Webster, looking a little more spiritual than usual, plays with the clarity, force and insight that make her invaluable in the theatre. As the accused, Leueen MacGrath also gives a beautiful performance full of tensions and awareness, bitterness and gratitude. Tom Helmore plays the part of a doctor with easy assurance.

There is a capital performance by Logan Ramsey as a feeble-minded youth whose emotions are both highly wrought and sincere. This is a little gem of acting. Marian Seldes, Patricia Hitchcock, Margery Maude and Ruth McDevitt are notably good in some of the other parts. And Peggy Clark, scene and costume designer, has ingeniously created the chaste but hospitable environment of a convent.

Perhaps this is as much as a theatregoer should require for an evening away from his television apparatus. But this theatregoer found the nobility of the conclusion overweighed by the monotony of the exposition. The exposition is about two times longer than the nobility. That's too much: nobility comes too high at the price.

New York Herald Tribune

February 21, 1951

By OTIS L. GUERNSEY JR.

Enveloped by Fog

AN EDGE-OF-THE-GALLOWS suspense drama imported from England is sometimes taut but more often discursive in its American premiere at the Forty-eighth Street Theater. Written by Charlotte Hastings, "The High Ground" tells how a compassionate nun works to prove her instinctive belief in the innocence of a convicted murderess. In the setting of a convent isolated by a flood, Margaret Webster wears the habit with an air of frustrated intelligence, and Leueen MacGrath, as the prisoner, is a scarlet-clad figure of controlled despair. There is more than a little drama in this situation, but much of it is dissipated in formalized, sorrowful attitudes and a great deal of explanatory language.

* * *

The play opens on an ominous note with the flood threatening the village, with a moronic village boy losing command of himself as he goes about his chores in this hospital-convent and with the arrival of the prisoner stranded in this high place along with her two guards. The script proceeds at a snail's pace, taking its ease for much expository dialogue about what has happened in the past, for a few theological observations and for all too infrequent, short revelations of character. In construction, this script has less the look of a calculated suspense plan than of a watered and artificially delayed series of events. Even the ache of sympathy for the victim becomes a little monotonous after a long period of hand-wringing without any appreciable change in the original state of things.

* * *

As in all of her acting appearances, Miss Webster is a strong figure on the stage as she portrays a sister wrestling with vanity in her own conscience and with facts in the relationships around her. Miss McGrath plays the doomed visitor with a gaunt expression superimposed on her blonde good looks, in an accurate picture of hopelessness and resentment. The contrast between the shadow of the gallows and of the Cross is a good one, but it is never exploited in clear or forceful theatrical terms. Herman Shumlin's direction keeps the characters going about convent business or juggling telltale props, but, like the script, it fails to achieve those sharp, clear moments of poignancy or irony that carry a leisurely thriller through its deliberate mannerisms.

* * *

Tom Helmore has an important but thankless role which requires him to blend as unnoticeably as possible into the background as an efficient young doctor working on the premises. Ruth McDevitt is one of those motherly and amiable old souls that one would expect to find in a congregation of mercy; Patricia Hitchcock is a bouncing young nurse, and Neil Fitzgerald and Mary Bell are properly noncommital as the guards on an unpleasant duty. Logan Ramsay plays the mentally deficient youth with highly commendable, if unattractive, realism. Peggy Clark's single convent hall set is appropriate to a play whose surroundings are a large part of the mood. Produced by Albert H. Rosen, "The High Ground" uses excellent materials, but the pattern of its emotional tension is blurred.

Journal American

February 21, 1951

'Who-Dunnit' Proves Mildly Captivating

By JOHN McCLAIN

There are those of us who are always wide open for a good who-dunnit, and as such I was mildly captivated by "The High Ground," which was unveiled last night at the Forty-Eighth Street Theatre with Margaret Webster, Tom Helmore and Leueen MacGrath in the stellar roles. The performances are uniformly excellent, so that even when you become aware that Mr. Helmore is a bad man you are still sufficiently interested to remain riveted to your seat until the final curtain falls.

Unfamiliar as they must be to almost everybody, these characters who find themselves suddenly in the Convent of Our Lady of Rheims in Denzil St. David, near Norwich, England, through dint of plausible writing and good elocution are able to involve us emotionally in their problems.

There has been a flood, it seems, and everybody is taking refuge on the High Ground which is occupied by the convent. This will do as a means of getting all the people into a small space until the atom bomb is dropped and then it can be played in an underground shelter.

* * *

Refuge From Rain

In any event, it just so happens that four of the persons who take temporary domicile in the convent are Miss MacGrath, and a lady and gentleman employed by the police force and Mr. Helmore, a doctor. Miss MacGrath has been convicted of killing her brother and the arms of the law were about to deliver her to the noose when the rains came. In lieu of drowning they went to the convent.

The rest of the show involves Sister Mary Bonaventure (Margaret Webster), one of the resident nuns, who should really be called Sister Mary, Private Eye. For it is she who, in the last act, establishes the fact that Mr. Helmore actually knocked off Miss MacGrath's brother in such a manner that it would place the blame squarely on Miss MacGrath.

I will not go into all the details of why Miss MacGrath is willing to take this rap, biting her lip and painting tapestry the while, but the fact is that she gets off just before the festivities end.

* * *

Good Job

It is a thoroughly professional job throughout. Apart from the people featured there are expert performances by Ruth McDevitt, Margery Maude and especially Logan Ramsey, who turns in a spectacular characterization as Willie, the village idiot.

I approved of the direction by Herman Shumlin and I thought the single set of the convent by Peggy Clark was unostentatious and exact.

I should say, in short, that it's good but not great.

DAILY NEWS

February 21, 1951

'The High Ground' a Nicely Acted Murder Drama Set in a Convent

By JOHN CHAPMAN

"The High Ground," which was produced by Albert H. Rosen last evening at the Forty-Eighth St. Theatre, is one of those nice, neat, intelligent British murder mystery plays in which everybody sits around until the murderer exposes himself and indulges in a tidy fit. It is nicely, neatly and intelligently acted by Margaret Webster, Leueen MacGrath, Logan Ramsey and others of a good company—including the member of the company who has the tidy fit at the end of the evening, who must not be identified. If you knew who the bloke was at the beginning, half of your fun would be spoiled.

The play is by Charlotte Hastings. Miss Hastings is interested in proving the innocence of a girl convicted of murder, instead of proving the guilt of the party who done it—and, since the convicted girl is Leueen MacGrath, there is considerable sympathy for Miss Hastings' project. Miss MacGrath is an excellent and attractive actress and I am very glad that it was not she who gave her brother an overdose of sleeping medicine.

Nun Solves Mystery.

Miss MacGrath is on her way to a death cell in a prison, accompanied by a bailiff and a matron, when a storm halts the cheery trio in a convent in an English village. Here Margaret Webster, a sister of the convent, becomes convinced that Miss MacGrath is innocent because the young lady is so artistic and sensitive and can mend tapestries. So Miss Webster begins reconstructing the murder case, and almost but not quite before you know it she has pinned this capital offense on the right party.

Ordinarily I am as fond of British whodunits as a high school student is of reefers, but "The High Ground" failed to raise my pulse much last evening. Perhaps it was because the author was trying to prove somebody's innocence, whereas I like the sort of yarn in which the author is trying to prove somebody's guilt. I see so many innocent people in the course of a day that one more doesn't stir me up much, even when she is Leueen MacGrath.

Logan Ramsey Is Good.

I did like the way Miss Webster handled her case, though. A nice, well-spoken nun with a level head. I admired briefly the daughters of Gilbert Seldes and Alfred Hitchcock (Marian and Patricia, respectively) in their bits as helpers around the convent. I can commend Tom Helmore in the role of a doctor, Neil Fitzgerald as a bailiff and Mary Bell as a prison matron. And I really do admire the work of Logan Ramsey in the character of a half-wit boy who is part Boris Karloff and part Mickey Rooney. I hope young Mr. Ramsey's career on the stage continues without too much layoffs in TV.

There is an exceptionally handsome setting by Peggy Clark, and Herman Shumlin has directed all his actors quite sensibly.

In recent seasons the whodunit has had little success on the stage and I don't think "The High Ground" will be any wow. But one of these years an author is going to have his murder committed spang in view of everybody, instead of putting it offstage and in the past tense, and is going to have his play start with this murder. He won't let any of his characters sit down, either. That will be a thriller!

"Razzle Dazzle"

Journal American

February 20, 1951

Buoyant and Young And a Lot of Fun

By JOHN McCLAIN

You sit all around the four sides of a room which has been staggered up from a sort of dance floor, see? And then suddenly the lights go up and there are people on the floor carrying on, singing and dancing and cracking jokes.

That is the setting known as "The Arena," a corollary of the Edison Hotel in W. 47th st., and the entertainment offered last night was a new musical review called "Razzle Dazzle," presenting a lot of nearly unknown singers and dancers, song writers and lyricists.

You have to get used to the medium and you mustn't expect too much, but if you approach the entire proceedings in a spirit of fun and frolic, as though you were attending the latest edition of the Princeton Triangle Show you will have a very amusing time indeed.

There is a great deal to be said about the arena-type theatre, pro and con. On the pro side it can be maintained that you are right on top of the players and that the whole thing is delightfully informal and intime.

• • •

Brilliant Spots

On the con side it can be said that the performer has not been discovered who can project in four directions and you are a cinch to miss much of the words. There also is the fact that the sets, if at all, must be muscled in and out of the premises by the players.

Last night's offering had many brilliant spots. There is a small young woman named Dorothy Greener who comes out and does a single about "MGM," the plaint of a bewildered movie fan, and there is a continuous sketch involving Miss Barbara Hamilton, as a great theatrical star, and the same Miss Greener, as an autograph seeker, which is more often very funny than not.

There is good straight song sending by Jet MacDonald and James Harwood, James Jewell and Jane White, and exciting dancing by Kate Friedlich and Bob Herget.

Lee Goodman performs admirably in the thankless task of "actor," "the author," and "Prince Stanislaus" in various sketches and all hands make their complicated entrances and exits, often bearing some of the props in and out from strange angles, without apparent discomfort.

• • •

Buoyant, Young

I didn't quite understand a song called "You're Only Young Once or Twice." When are you young twice? But then I think that was compensated for by another of Miss Greener's solos, somewhat reminiscent of Bea Lillie, entitled "Grace Fogarty."

Her vocal admiration for Miss Fogarty, a fellow laborer in a department store, remains intact even after her heroine winds up in the gutter. You get the idea?

The whole thing is buoyant and young. It's a different idea and everybody involved seems to be having a good time.

I think you will, too.

"RAZZLE DAZZLE"

Revue with sketches and lyrics by Mike Stewart; music by Leo Schumer, Shelley Mowell, James Reed Lawlor, Bernice Kroll and Irma Jurist; staged by Edward Reveaux; choreography by Nelle Fisher; presented by David Heilweil and Derrick Lynn-Thomas in association with Madeline Capp and Greer Johnson at the Arena Theatre, February 19, 1951, with the following cast: Peter Conlow, Kate Friedlich, Lee Goodman, Dorothy Greener, Bob Herget, Barbara Hamilton, James Jewell, James Harwood, Jet MacDonald, Christine Karner, Jean Sincere, Frank Reynolds, Flori Waren and Jane White.

The New York Times

February 20, 1951

Spring Revels Begin at the Arena With the Opening of 'Razzle Dazzle'

By BROOKS ATKINSON

"Razzle Dazzle" is an attractive title, and so is the musical revue of that name which opened at the Arena last evening. Perhaps there is more razzle than dazzle in it, since the Arena's space is limited. But a handful of performers who are guilty of the atrocious crime of being young have begun the spring revels pleasantly by looking bright and clean in their fresh costumes and by keeping their sense of humor gay and mischievous. This is the most winning show the Arena has yet put on.

Since the central stage is the size of a pocket handkerchief, the performers do not have much room to swing around in, and the dancers feel the constriction most. It will be slaughter near Eighth Avenue if any of them ever takes a header.

* * *

But there is plenty of room for comedy. For most of the fooling is wrapped up in a pint-sized mimic with a squeaky voice who weaves in and out of the show burlesquing the savage motion picture blandly entitled "All About Eve." She is Dorothy Greener. She plays the part of the shy little sycophant who takes treacherous advantage of every kindness bestowed on her by a glamorous actress and finally climbs up ruthlessly to stardom.

Like most of the sketches in "Razzle Dazzle," this cartoon has been written lightly in a wry spirit by Mike Stewart, who apparently knows the foibles of the screen. Miss Greener is exactly the right person for it. She has an embarrassed grin on her face perpetually. Her accent is awful. Her humility is as dangerous as a steel trap. When Miss Greener finally eliminates her benefactor and stars in a miniature lampoon of "The Student Prince," her inadequately bravura performance is very funny indeed. And that is the high point of the whole show.

* * *

Otherwise "Razzle Dazzle" teeters between the amateurish and the slight. Some of the sketches, like "Sign Here" and "The Light Fantastic," do not quite make their points. In this respect "Razzle Dazzle" apes some of its lavish betters on Broadway. But most of the songs are agreeable to the accompaniment of two pianos and some percussion neatly stowed away in the balcony. Jet MacDonald has an especially fine voice, and Jean Sincere, Jane White and James Jewell are also worth appreciating.

Some day these band-box performers will be more vigorously professional. But they will never be more unspoiled, decent and beguiling, nor better company in an informal theatre. Crisply directed by Edward Reveaux and designed with style and taste by William Riva, "Razzle Dazzle" is a refreshing variation on the theme of friendly entertainment. And Miss Greener is an especially droll little caricaturist.

Daily Mirror

February 20, 1951

'Razzle Dazzle' Provides Pleasant Evening of Fun

By ROBERT COLEMAN

A group of talented young people presented an intimate and informal revue, "Razzle Dazzle," at the Edison Arena last evening under the managerial auspices of David Heilweil and Derrick Lynn-Thomas. The sketches and lyrics are by Mike Stewart, and there is music by Leo Schumer, Shelley Mowell, James Reed Lawlor, Bernice Kroll and Irma Jurist.

The Edison Arena is a pleasant place to spend a couple of hours. One may have pre-theatre dinner and intermission drinks at tables in the rear of the room, and then merely take a few steps to a seat. It's really quite cosy.

The new arrival is offered in what has come to be known as the central staging technique, where the audience sits on all four sides of the stage. Scenery is dispensed with, props and costumes alone being used to establish locale and atmosphere.

The skits spoof Hollywood, old house buying, silent movies, burlesque, temperamental stars and operetta. They range from so-so to amiably amusing. The songs fall nicely on the ears. Nelle Fisher and Jerry Ross have choreographed helpful dances, and Edward Reveaux has paced the show effectively. The score is played on two pianos by Lawlor and Herbert Schutz.

The cast is high spirited. The young dancers, singers and funsters work as if they really enjoyed it. Heilweil and Lynn-Thomas have a genuine find in Dorothy Greener, an ex-music editor making her debut on Broadway. With a squeaky little voice, a stringy brunette bob and a deadpan expression, she wanders through the numbers and takes time out occasionally to do monologues.

Miss Greener could be described as a femme Wally Cox. Her delivery is nonchalant and sure fire. We think you're going to be seeing her hereabouts for quite a spell.

Others meriting salutes are Lee Goodman, Peter Conlow, Kate Friedlich, Barbara Hamilton, James Harwood, Bob Herget, James Jewell, Christine Karner, Jet MacDonald, Frank Reynolds, Jean Sincere, Flori Waren and Jane White. Miss Karner looks like a blonde combination of Celeste Holm and Betty Garrett.

The Edison Arena has developed a large and loyal following. We think it will relish "Razzle Dazzle," which in our book is more razzle than dazzle.

DAILY NEWS

February 20, 1951

Arena Revue, 'Razzle Dazzle,' Is a Woefully Amateurish Job

By JOHN CHAPMAN

A revue titled "Razzle Dazzle" was presented last evening at the Arena in the Hotel Edison. To quote Vivian Blaine's song in "Guys and Dolls," it all seemed like a horrible dream. I spent a good bit of the time I was there trying not to look at the stage and not listening very sharply. In these moments of surcease I began wondering, with no little horror, what life would be like if there should be a series of theatre-in-the-round revues. I dreamed of titles like "Oh, Shoot," "Hey Hey" and "Oop."

Let it be taken for granted that all the young men and women who have written and are playing in "Razzle Dazzle" have good intentions. Let it be admitted that a few of them, like Lee Goodman, Dorothy Greener and Barbara Hamilton, are personable and, in fleeting moments, amusing. And then let it be stated that the revue is distressingly unprofessional. It would be an act of cruelty to apply professional standards of judgment to the show's songs, sketches and dances.

Herald Tribune NEW YORK

February 20, 1951

Mike Stewart's Musical Opens at the Edison

By Otis L. Guernsey Jr.

The new revue at the Arena is a tasteless compote of dull dances and weak satires on show business. Presented out in the open on a four-sided stage, "Razzle Dazzle" keeps a group of young performers gyrating through numbers sadly lacking in the style and polish necessary for a smart musical ensemble. There is one broad laugh at the expense of operetta in the final scene, and a little monologuist named Dorothy Greener gets a plaintive humor into her expositions about an M-G-M picture and about a salesgirl. For the rest, the show is a tiresome and tuneless lot of words and motion.

The sketches by Mike Stewart are tongue-in-cheek affairs supposed to capitalize on the eccentricities of "All About Eve," Gian-Carlo Menotti or sophisticated British comedy. The straining actors are unable to hit the various spots with the material at hand, and the intervals of music by five composers do not help any. Many of the love songs are delivered off key, and the Nelle Fisher choreography has a nervous, jack-in-the-box quality about it. There is a famine of melodic or comic excitement in this production, which leaves the disturbing impression of moving about wildly without control or direction.

There is, of course, a double jeopardy involved here; not only is this new show risking the everyday hazards of Broadway, but it is facing the risk in the round, a form which is itself in the experimental stage. The intimacy between audience and action does not help to hide the flaws of "Razzle Dazzle," and, in turn, the revue does not add to the growing prestige of theater-in-the-round at the Arena. It is merely unfortunate that a compound chance of form and material should be taken at this time, with such disappointing results.

New York Post
HOME NEWS
February 20, 1951

By Richard Watts Jr.

Something Called 'Razzle Dazzle'

"Razzle Dazzle," which opened in the Arena of the Hotel Edison last night, is Broadway's first revue-in-the-round. Let us grant it that distinction, because it is the only one that can be bestowed upon it. A singularly witless and tedious little musical show, it has neither the smartness and showmanship of the professional theater nor the disarming charm of the better amateur stages. I suspect its admiring producers should have kept it for their private parties.

There is, indeed, only one person connected with the proceedings who wouldn't have been better off at home. That exception is a friendly and likeable girl comic named Dorothy Greener, who will be accurately described today by all of the reviewers as a kind of female Wally Cox. I can't say that I thought her quite as hilarious as the great Beatrice Lillie seemed to find her last evening, but I am grateful to her for the only bearable moment in "Razzle Dazzle."

Whirling Actors

A revue-in-the-round apparently differs from other intimate revues chiefly in that its actors have to keep whirling constantly so they won't always be presenting their backs to most of the spectators. Another difference is that, following a number, the players carry off their own props. Come to think of it, there is a third difference. The close proximity of the audience in arena-staging puts a perilous burden on the physical attributes of the performers.

"Razzle Dazzle" naturally makes a determined effort to be satirical. Its targets are many, including silent movies, a cinema biography of Rodgers and Hart, drawing-room comedies, the operas of Gian-Carlo Menotti, burlesque shows and Gypsy operettas, and there is a whole series of sketches, burlesquing, I take it, the motion picture called "All About Eve." It was my impression that these numbers had in common a feeble sort of preciousness.

Songs and Dances

Nor can I say very much on behalf of its songs and dances. The songs are attributed to no less than five earnest composers, and lack of distinction is certainly their prevailing quality. As for the dances, I suppose that the choreographer, Nellie Fisher, was so busy seeing that her dancers kept facing their surrounding spectators that she didn't have much time for other ingenuity. Everything struck me as pretty unimaginative.

As I have said, the one performer to profit from the new revue is this Miss Greener, even though she has a number about her friend, Grace Fogarty, that is a little too similar to Wally Cox's account of his pal, Dufo. Jet MacDonald, who made a favorable impression in a couple of musical shows, and Jane White, who was so fine as the heroine of "Strange Fruit," are among the casualties. Mediocrity is the unhappy word for "Razzle Dazzle."

New York World-Telegram
and
The Sun
February 20, 1951

'Razzle Dazzle' Relies Too Much on Youth

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

Type—Musical revue.
Feature—Arena staging.
Credit—Youthfulness.

"Razzle Dazzle" is the first revue presented locally on a central platform. It explores in a very youthful manner many possibilities of arena theater.

It is an uneven entertainment. It suffers from the same ills that beset the most expensive Broadway girl shows. Quite simply, the material lacks distinction.

Yet in this case, when you come away, it is the brighter moments that stick with you.

A New Personality.

Throughout the performance there runs a satire on the movie "All About Eve," that includes the show's brightest moments. The ambitious understudy is portrayed by a tiny, fresh personality named Dorothy Greener. This character performs with a strange mixture of dead-pan complaisance and an innocent glee that what she does is just lovely.

Miss Greener also does nicely with monologues that would be more impressive if they less suggested the material of Wally Cox.

Satire Overdone.

There is a nice idea in the portrayal by song and dance of the history of a house for sale. But the development is without shape or climax.

One of the show's best numbers is a scarecrow dance by Peter Conlow, which is light, limber and inventive. This particular choreography eminently suits the small central stage.

Lee Goodman, comic of night clubs and the air, is great assistance in a number of the sketches, and Jet MacDonald and James Jewell are a highly decorative pair of singing juveniles. Jane White is at her best as a strip-tease artist in a Union City Burlesque, and there is some sprightly youthful stepping by Kate Friedlich and Bob Herget.

An entertaining personality is presented in Barbara Hamilton, late addition to the cast, who mugs her way with happy effect through the role of the star in the "Eve" sequences.

The show's greatest asset is an unpretentious, young eagerness. It is a little like getting to see an audition. The people are unquestionably talented, but few of them know yet how best to present themselves, and the material they have found is of no real consequence.

"Cox & Box"-"The Pirates of Penzance"

The New York Times
February 20, 1951

D'Oyly Carte's Bill

For the fifth and final production of its current visit to this country, the D'Oyly Carte Company is offering "The Pirates of Penzance," preceded by "Cox and Box." A reviewer paying a visit to the London minstrels at the St. James Theatre could achieve a certain notoriety by rendering an unfavorable report. There might not be a letter from the President but there would be mail, indeed.

However, foregoing all temptation, this morning's notice must be—as have those previously—exceedingly favorable. The one jarring note is that these experts in Gilbert and Sullivan whimsey will not be here beyond this Saturday night. As is the case with Frederic, that noble hero of this week's item, duty must be done and the D'Oyly Carte Company has commitments back home.

Since it is always better to dwell on the brighter side of things, let us, then, concentrate on "The Pirates of Penzance," in which Sir William cut loose with sheer fantasy and Sir Arthur with some of his loveliest tunes. There is little political or social jabbing in this work, although Sir William does plenty of poking at the idea that regardless of the consequences or the assignment, duty is paramount. And the entire premise is based on the Gilbertian paradox of one's being born on Feb. 29.

* * *

The company, of course, is on its mettle and plays as if this performance were the very first ever given. The apparent enjoyment that everyone takes in the proceedings is a source of never-ending amazement, not to mention pleasure. Even Isidore Godfrey, the amiable baton wielder, never gives the impression that he has been directing orchestras through Sir Arthur's scores for a quarter of a century. George Sheringham's costumes and the production as a whole have freshness and gaiety.

Neville Griffiths, the young newcomer to the company who delighted the local citizenry on his initial appearance in "The Mikado," now is singing the role of Frederic,